

Oxfam America Student Organization:
Building awareness and support for poverty reduction

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gerald E. Waite", is written over a horizontal line.

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Abstract

In order to increase awareness and activism regarding international social justice issues, a student chapter of Oxfam America, an international relief and development organization, was founded at Ball State University. This creative project reviews the role of non-governmental organizations and Oxfam America in particular, analyzes social movement and student organizational models, and finally reviews the first year of the Oxfam America Student Organization at Ball State University. The main goal of this project was to create an effective student organization and prepare a new generation of leaders to maintain the organization's activism and integrity. The secondary goal was to run an Oxfam campaign on Ball State's campus in order to generate local political actions that will effect change at the national and international level. In its first year of existence, the Oxfam America Ball State Chapter successfully generated over 600 political actions regarding food security, climate adaptation finance, and international development.

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Introduction

Background on Non-Governmental Organizations

The world has become increasingly globalized, and has consequently thrust upon the individual the concept of global citizenship and world consciousness. For those who have accepted this shift in cognizance, civic engagement has become fundamental to remain acutely involved in world politics and events. Individually, the shift is a kind of transcendence that leads one to better understand her or his place in the world, and the outstanding social responsibility that follows the recognition of human equality and connectedness. Though this new attitude can be fulfilled through various opportunities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become an important vehicle of social change and global awareness in the midst of globalization (Beyer, 2007). As described in a recent journal article on the role of NGOs,

The vision of the global common good cannot only be accomplished by individuals but needs institutional support... NGOs and Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) promote the moral good implicitly and explicitly through development projects, political support for diaspora and exile groups, and political and economic support of national governments. (Witteborn, 2010, p. 359)

Non-governmental organizations 'do' global citizenship. They believe in the power of "thinking globally and acting locally," and thereby offer the perfect opportunity for individuals to take action on global affairs (Haigh, 2006, p. 329).

International non-governmental organizations were first defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on February 27th, 1950 in resolution 288(x) as "any international organization that is not founded by an international treaty" ("Resolution 288 (x) ," 1950). The term is broad and is not clearly divided from non-profit organizations (NPOs), nor

does it exclude for-profit organizations by definition. However, NGOs have a set of basic, generally-accepted characteristics. NGOs are for the most part private, nonprofit, transnational or international, and receive a bulk of their funding from private sources (although many receive a portion of their funding from public sources including governments or inter-governmental agencies) (Pease, 2010). NGOs vary in purpose, whether designed to emphasize field operation, advocacy, grassroots development, research, or otherwise, but all have foundations in a concern for global humanitarian matters, social-justice, or environmental protection (Beyer, 2007, p. 519). Examples of well-known NGOs include The International Red Cross, Amnesty International, Doctors without Borders, World Vision, Save the Children, and Oxfam International.

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

A popular question today is what role NGOs ought to play in international organizations such as the United Nations and World Trade Organization, and how to incorporate their expertise and experience on an administrative level. The United Nations currently allows NGO participation under the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Committee on NGOs. Once granted consultative status, an NGO is given

access and participation in all of the subsidiary bodies of the Council such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Furthermore, having consultative status also gives NGOs the opportunity to participate in the Human Rights Council and many of the human rights treaty bodies of the United Nations. ("Record number of," 2011, para. 2-3)

Today it is estimated that there are over 30,000 NGOs worldwide (Beyer, 2007, p. 513).

However, only about 3,500 NGOs are accredited with the UN council, each of which may offer

advice or guidance on particular issues. Roughly 60% of the NGOs listed as participants have been given either ‘special’ or ‘general’ consultative status, which requires organizations to submit a report of their work with the United Nations every four years. (“United Nations department,” 2011)

Non-governmental organizations are of value to global citizens and international organizations due to their expertise in global humanitarian affairs and their proximity to grassroots advocates and poor or remote communities (Beyer, 2007, p. 519). NGOs are valued as change agents, as an avenue for influence in international and national policy decisions, as well as a more informal influence on the knowledge of specific and wide-ranging humanitarian issues. In addition to providing their expertise to international organizations like the UN, they also play a major role in civil society and education. According to a Peace Corps training manual, “NGOs increase ‘social capital’ by providing people with opportunities to build trust in each other and the capacity to work together toward common goals” (*An NGO Training Guide*, n.d., p. 22). They do this by promoting diversity, motivating citizens to take action, and encouraging government accountability, all with public participation. “NGOs are an expression of people’s belief that through their own initiative, they can better fulfill their potential by working together, and in so doing reduce the opportunity gap that exists between the advantaged and disadvantaged in society” (*An NGO Training Guide*, n.d., p. 25).

Students and Non-Governmental Organizations

Nongovernmental organizations like Oxfam America provide the means for individuals to participate in global events beyond their own nation, and allow individuals to influence international politics in small, though sometimes controversial, ways (Pease, 2010, p. 37). By this definition, students and NGOs are natural partners. Engaged citizens and students work with

NGOs to address international issues including climate change, international trade, poverty, health, and security. NGOs create bridges between broader civil societies and international affairs in a way that bypasses the usual political avenues, and increases awareness of global events largely ignored by popular media.

Because students make strong partners with these organizations, NGOs are often attracted to higher education institutions. In an effort to extend their mission, build grassroots support, and educate citizens about relevant social justice issues, non-governmental organizations have turned to student leaders and organizations to create local change and awareness that support the organization's specific goals. Oxfam America, one of 14 branches of Oxfam International, is a leader in youth engagement, having designed a program specifically to teach students across the United States how to run a grassroots Oxfam America campaign on their campus and in their home community.

Oxfam America is not the only non-governmental organization incorporating students at institutions of higher education. Bread for the World, the Genocide Intervention Network, Student for a Free Tibet, Free the Slaves, and the ONE campaign, are all invested in student organizations as an avenue for education and advocacy. However, Oxfam's student leadership is an exemplary program that includes a week-long training in Boston, Massachusetts with members from Oxfam America's professional staff. Since its creation it has been used as a model for six other Oxfam affiliates' student leadership programs (Stoltzfus, personal communication, March 17, 2011). The program is also offered free of cost, a major advantage for students who rely on financial aid to attend college. Personally, as a student interested in both international politics and social justice issues, Oxfam America's student leader program offered me the best opportunity to explore the realities of creating political change through internationally-organized

campaigns and grassroots support. The philosophy of program represents the epitome of NGO and student leadership by promoting the concept of ‘thinking globally, acting locally.’ Choosing to apply for Oxfam America’s program was an easy decision because the program offered the opportunity to gain real experience in leadership, social justice concerns, political advocacy, and campaign organizing while also providing a way to network with Oxfam’s staff and student leaders from across the United States.

Background on Oxfam America

“A just world without poverty.” The vision statement outlined on Oxfam America’s website is a lofty goal; some would even say ludicrous. But without that vision, Oxfam would not be what it is today. Oxfam America is an international relief and development organization that works on all levels of society to achieve their mission: “to create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and injustice” (“Who We Are — Oxfam America,” para. 1).

Oxfam began as a famine relief committee at Oxford University in Great Britain in 1942. Made up of Quakers, university intellectuals and social activists, the group began sending financial aid and resources to groups working to alleviate poverty throughout Europe. Soon after Europe recovered from the war, the organization turned its focus to developing nations. In 1970 Oxfam Great Britain provided loans for the development of an Oxfam branch in the United States (Oxfam America), which headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. Made up of just a small group of volunteers at the time, the group made three early decisions that have shaped Oxfam’s strategy to this day. First, Oxfam America chose not to accept government funding in order to maintain an independent voice regarding United States foreign policy decisions. Oxfam would instead gain support by building a cohesive system of grassroots campaigns. Second, Oxfam America maintained that it would not display poor people in a condescending or abject

manner, and instead appeal to the public through thought-provoking information. Third, Oxfam America chose to devote its resources in support of emerging and sustainable organizations in developing countries that could be models to others. By supporting existing organizations, Oxfam America stresses country and community ownership in development. ("Who We Are — Oxfam America")

Since 1970, Oxfam America has grown steadily. The organization became financially independent of Great Britain within ten years, began focusing on congressional advocacy and public education in the 1980s, and opened a Washington, D.C. office in 1994 in order to build a more comprehensive grassroots campaign strategy ("Who We Are — Oxfam America"). Part of that strategy includes coordinating actions across the United States. To facilitate relevant grassroots movements and action, Oxfam America trains adult volunteers to manage or begin an "Oxfam Action Corps" in their city, and trains college students through their CHANGE initiative leadership program to start or successfully manage an Oxfam student organization on their campus ("Oxfam Action Corps — Oxfam America"). Today Oxfam America runs four major campaigns including "Right to Know, Right to Decide," Climate Change, Economic Justice/Aid Reform, and a "U.S. Gulf Coast Recovery" campaign ("Campaigns — Oxfam America"). These campaigns are organized with the help of Action Corps groups in eleven major U.S. cities, and over 150 Oxfam America student organizations at American universities, high schools, and colleges (Stoltzfus, personal communication, March 17, 2011).

CHANGE Program Philosophy on Social Change

After hearing about Oxfam America's work and reading about their goals and strategies, I decided to apply for the CHANGE initiative, and was selected to become a 2010 CHANGE Leader during my junior year at Ball State. Each year since 2000, Oxfam has invited students

from approximately 50 colleges across the U.S. to a week-long program in Boston, Massachusetts to teach emerging student leaders about the global fight against poverty, hunger and injustice. Leadership and effective advocacy are also major themes. The goal of the training is for CHANGE leaders to return to their campus and mobilize students to create action related to a current Oxfam campaign through an Oxfam America or similar student organization. (“Oxfam at a Glance”)

The Boston training was led by Oxfam headquarters staff, an Oxfam summer intern, and previous CHANGE leaders. In many ways the week was organized like a summer camp, including ice-breaker games, seminars, small group discussions, free time, and even a talent show known as “OxJam.” The new CHANGE leaders were given an information binder and flash drive containing all the training information and extra resources about each of the campaigns and building effective organizations. Each day we attended about three different information sessions, engaged in a hands-on project, and received leadership training. Specialized staff from Oxfam’s Boston and Washington D.C. offices periodically visited to give us their insight into Oxfam’s work, and a few tips on running campaigns on campus. The first information session covered Oxfam’s work, how they do it and why. The second went over the expectations of CHANGE leaders. Throughout the week we attended sessions about each campaign, lobbying, tabling and canvassing (information tables), music outreach, leadership styles, and a few sessions about how to create a strong and long-lasting student organization.

The most important part of the program however, was not the trainings, the manuals, the data or statistics. It was learning to work as a team for a common purpose. Every day some of the CHANGE leaders would admit “I still don’t know enough to build my organization back home. I need more information.” The response: “trust the process.” It was not until about seven months

after the training, after I had started an Oxfam group at Ball State, that I realized the strategy behind those words. The Oxfam training was not just about the specific information and advice. It was about learning what it takes to inspire others, and allowing others inspire you. It was about meeting students from across the United States who truly and absolutely believed that change was possible. It was about making friends, making connections, and being inspired and encouraged by your peers. There were no cynics, no barriers, no judgments, and no hoops to jump through. The training week was about showing students that there truly is power in numbers. Individually we may lose focus, become discouraged, fail a project, or feel unimportant. But when taken together, 50 highly-motivated student leaders running 50 active Oxfam clubs is a force to be reckoned with. The quote most used that week came from Margaret Mead, the famous anthropologist and author, which highlighted the importance of bringing leaders together. “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has” (qtd. in Palmer, 1992, p. 14). The CHANGE initiative is about finding inspiration, finding motivation, and finding the support to continue to lead, separately, but together.

The CHANGE program is important to Oxfam’s mission because it builds a new generation of leaders at the same time it spreads Oxfam’s work throughout the U.S. and creates additional grassroots support for key legislation. Although every organization is charged with supporting new leaders, Oxfam differs by building leaders explicitly, and targeting students before college graduation. The philosophy is that “young people are ready and capable leaders—if we leverage their knowledge, experience, excitement and enthusiasm we can increase and deepen their engagement with Oxfam America” (“CHANGE training manual”). From a cynical (yet not unreasonable) suspicion, the training may seem like strategic propaganda under the guise

of youth leadership training. But the staff at Oxfam in no way pressures the leaders to continue working for Oxfam in the future. Students can use the skills learned through the Oxfam initiative in leadership positions for any organization, as most of the skills are remarkably transferrable. Many CHANGE leaders go on to work for other similar or strategic organizations including the US Department of Agriculture, Special Advisor to the Secretary for the California Environmental Protection Agency, Peace Corps, and the Social Security Administration, but maintain a connection with Oxfam throughout their career. This strengthens Oxfam America's ability to partner with organizations on campaign initiatives (Stoltzfus, personal communication, March 17, 2011).

The CHANGE initiative is an important stepping-stone to creating change, but there is another layer of organization that has not been addressed. The theories and strategies for effective student organizations and social movements are important to review before analyzing the work of Ball State's Oxfam Chapter in particular. In the next section, social movement theories, student leadership theories, and student organization models will be examined.

Literature Review

The name of Oxfam America's student leadership program is more significant than one may recognize at first glance. The word "change," after all, has a variety of undertones and implications. As Oxfam America defines the program, the goal of CHANGE is "to broaden perspectives, inspire action, and shape a new generation of global citizens" ("Change Initiative," para. 1). But when taken in context of Oxfam America's overall mission and purpose, CHANGE means much more than a simple statement of new perspectives and student action. Each year, CHANGE leaders are required to run an Oxfam America campaign in their school communities. Oxfam campaigns are similar to social movements in many ways, which I will address after first going through the most common definitions of social movements.

Social Change Theories

In order to explore the role of the CHANGE program in terms of broader social change, we will analyze some of the more popular definitions of social movements. Although there is no one accepted definition of social movements, there seems to be a general consensus that social movements belong to the category of phenomenon that scholars cannot collectively define, 'know it when they see it.' For the purposes of this text, I will briefly review six common definitions of social movements, including definitions by Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, Charles Herbert Blumer, Sidney Tarrow, Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, Ruud Koopmans, and Bill Moyer, in succession.

Eyerman and Jamison's definition of social movements is more abstract than the other five, and will therefore be examined first to give a general understanding of the social movement. According to the two sociologists, social movements can be "best conceived of as temporary public spaces, as moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas,

identities and even ideals” (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991, p. 4). Although the definition leaves a lot to be wanting, it focuses specifically on the outcome and collectivity of the social movement. Asserting that social movements provide societies with these new abstract “ideas, identities and even ideals” denotes an overarching cultural change, positive or negative. Normally cultural change occurs as a result of gradual, long-term shifts in moral and ideological views. According to Eyerman and Jamison, however, the limitation of social movements is the qualification that they are temporary. Eyerman and Jamison posit that these cultural changes can occur more quickly through a social movement. Therefore, social movements aim to create for society ideas, identities and ideals in an expedited manner.

The second definition by Blumer points out three important characteristics of social movements including collectivity, positive change, and longevity or flexibility:

Social movements can be viewed as collective enterprises seeking to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in a condition of unrest, and derive their motive power on the one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new system of living. The career of a social movement depicts the emergence of a new order of life. (Blumer, 1969, p. 99)

These characteristics highlight the solidarity among a social movement’s members that stems generally from a collective desire to shift from an unsatisfying condition of life to another more satisfactory societal condition. In contrast to Eyerman and Jamison however, Blumer describes social movements as having a “career,” implying longevity and evolution to social movements rather than a temporary action to cause accelerated change. Whether temporary or more drawn out, however, Blumer does not deny the assertion that a social movement’s ultimate goal is to cause change. He only points out that dissatisfaction precedes a movement for positive change. A

broad definition, Blumer leaves open for interpretation the means by which a movement achieves its goals, as well as the structure through which a movement is organized or led. Other definitions address the question of social movement methodology.

Sidney Tarrow's definition brings another perspective to the social movement by noting the importance of political, social and cultural contexts and noting the conflictual nature of a movement between groups of people.

Contentious politics occurs when ordinary people, often in league with more influential citizens, join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities and opponents... When backed by dense social networks and galvanized by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols, contentious politics leads to sustained interaction with opponents. The result is the social movement. (Tarrow, 1998, p. 2)

This definition, by highlighting membership, contentious issues, and politics, brings the social movement into a democratic context, in which controversial issues are often brought to the public scene and debated by each group. Although not clear by this definition alone, Tarrow implies that the social movement he describes only begins on the side of the "ordinary people" who are confronting "elites, authorities and opponents." Such a description brings a more Marxist feel to the social movement, the masses against entrenched authorities. His claim that social movements are necessarily "sustained interaction," favors Blumer's definition over Eyerman and Jamison's, but does not exclude the notion of temporary protests or movements as long as they ebb and flow as part of a grander, sustained movement.

Della Porta and Diani add yet another two elements to the social movement, which appear to have been overlooked by, though not excluded from, the other definitions. According to this definition, social movements have four basic elements.

1. Informal networks, based on
2. Shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilise about
3. Conflictual issues, through
4. The frequent use of various forms of protest. (Della Porta and Diani, 1999, p. 16)

The second point has already been covered by Blumer and Eyerman and Jamison's definitions, and the third point has been explained by Tarrow. The first and last points are new, however. Although previous definitions have included collective action as part of a social movement, Della Porta and Diani pointedly add the qualifier "informal." Systemic, entrenched, or otherwise well-organized groups of people cannot be considered their own social movement by this definition. The significance of varying types of protests is also highlighted more by this definition than the others. Although the other three did not necessarily exclude protest from social movements, they also did not feel it necessary to point out as a major characteristic.

Ruud Koopmans expanded and emphasized Della Porta and Diani's first point about informal networks when he explained that "Social movements are characterized by a low degree of institutionalization, high heterogeneity, a lack of clearly defined boundaries and decision-making structures, a volatility matched by few other social phenomena'" (Koopmans, 1993, p. 637). Koopmans' definition is more exclusive than the previous definitions, and in fact adds a sense of disarray and chaos to the social movement by emphasizing its lack of structure.

Finally, Bill Moyer defines social movements in a way that combines elements of each of the previous definitions. According to Moyer, social movements are "collective actions in which the populace is alerted, educated, and mobilized, sometimes over years and decades, to challenge the power holders and the whole society to redress social problems or grievances and restore

critical social values” (Moyer, 2001, p. 111) By his definition, social movements do indeed challenge power holders and address perceived problems, attempt to create change through multiple avenues, and occur over a long period of time. A new element added by Moyer is the notion that a social movement may be undertaken in order to “restore” values. In contrast to Blumer’s explanation that a social movement hopes for a “new order of life,” Moyer suggests it may be a way to resolve values that have through one avenue or another been taken away (Blumer, 1969, p. 99).

Are Oxfam America’s campaigns part of a larger social movement? Can Oxfam be considered a social movement in itself? Perhaps, if we take a second look at Oxfam America’s mission and vision as a whole. As identified above, Oxfam America’s mission is “to create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and injustice,” and their vision is “a just world without poverty” (“Who We Are — Oxfam America,” para. 1). But there is much more to a social movement than a vision and goal. The following is a list of the characteristics of social movements put forth by the above definitions that Oxfam America meets.

1. Oxfam America’s work is based in collective creation; collective enterprises; dense social networks; solidarity; collective action
2. Oxfam America provides societies with ideas, identities, ideals
3. Oxfam America stems from dissatisfaction; contentious politics; and conflictual issues
4. Oxfam America interacts with opponents; challenges the power holders
5. Oxfam America has a vision, a hope for a new system of living

Based on these characteristics, Oxfam appears to qualify as a social movement. However, other characteristics clash with one another which make the definitions difficult to generalize and

compare to Oxfam's work. For example, time frame and network density are addressed in several ways. While Koopmans and Della Porta and Diani argue social movements are based on informal networks, Tarrow uses the term "dense social networks." Similarly, although Eyerman and Jamison define social movements as "temporary public spaces," Blumer, Tarrow, Della Porta and Diani, and Moyer each include a characteristic that would assume the prolonged existence of a social movement including "career," "sustained," "frequent," and finally "over years and decades." Recognizing that Oxfam America has existed for over 40 years, Oxfam does fit the description of longevity presented.

The problem is that by characterizing Oxfam America as a social movement, a slippery slope argument emerges. If Oxfam qualifies as a social movement then so can other humanitarian-based non-governmental organizations, and if most NGOs are considered, than private organizations, political organizations, and others could be next. That is not the intention. In fact it is more likely that Oxfam America's goal and vision are grounded in a larger global development and anti-poverty movement that has blossomed since the end of WWII—the same ideological movement that led to the Marshall plan for reconstructing Europe, the Bretton Woods System, and the creation of the United Nations.

The purpose of this comparison is not to prove that Oxfam is a social movement, but to demonstrate how movements create social change, whether through a temporary movement, a series of individual protests, or through a structured non-governmental organization like Oxfam America. In every case, the goal is positive change. It is within that larger context and understanding of social movements that the student chapter of Oxfam America exists.

Student Empowerment

Youth have played an important role in history, especially in the social movements of the 20th century. To be sure, one of the greatest social movement leaders of all time, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was only 25 at the time of the Montgomery Bus boycott (Marri, 2008). As students begin to act on a new sense of global consciousness, and join movements through NGOs, campus groups, or larger national networks, they become leaders. From the newest members to presidents of organizations, each student will find her or himself learning new roles and entertaining new leadership skills. Student organizations in particular require strong leadership because of the high turnover rate of students; because it is likely student organization leaders are in their junior or senior year, executive board members only hold positions for one or two years. Thus it is imperative that each of the members learn to be leaders in their own right, to guarantee the sustainability of the student organization as the core student leaders graduate.

According to Dana Mitra, student engagement is an important way for young people to participate in society. “Student voice can go further to entail young people substantially participating in the change process by collaborating with adults to address the problems in their schools and in the broader policy environment” (p. 315). In order to participate however, students must position their voice in the best way possible to be taken seriously and gain acceptance among authority. Mitra goes on to claim that students are actually most effective when they act in a broader arena, working outside the institution they wish to change. This allows for ‘distributed leadership,’ allowing students to be involved in changes that affect them, and that they care about. (Mitra, 2006)

Building an effective organization depends on the leadership and organizational capacity of those involved. As individuals within a group begin to recognize common challenges and

learn teamwork, they become more engaged and active leaders. Their leadership in turn strengthens the organizational capacity and mission of the group. Student organizations have the ability to build true leaders by offering an avenue through which to practice public speaking, activism, and community involvement. Robert Conyne, in a journal article titled “Models for Conducting Student Organization Development,” makes an interesting observation in his analysis of student organizations. “It seems that these organizations are largely ignored by student affairs professionals...as intentional vehicles for advancing student development” (Conyne, 1983, p. 394). This is unfortunate. Through student organizations, students and faculty alike have the chance to build coalitions and further the university’s goal to develop strong leaders. They also offer experience for students who have little to no leadership or professional work under their belt.

There are many ways to increase leadership capacity of a student organization. For these purposes, we will consider student organizations equivalent to grassroots organizations, as they share many of the same characteristics. Grassroots organizations are “small in geographic scope, mainly comprised of volunteers with usually one full-time paid staff member, autonomous, informally organized, low to moderate external power, and with few economic resources” (Sobeck, 2007, p. 19). While student organizations add their own elements to the fore such as age, campus settings, and bureaucratic restrictions of school administration, they also share the characteristics laid out in the definition of grassroots organizations. In both cases, challenges arise due to limited resources and capacity. Accepting that these organizations are unlikely to grow to the status of recognized nonprofits and will remain small and informal, leadership development is the greatest factor in the key to increasing the success of the organization.

Empowerment theory, a strategy to build individual skills and abilities within grassroots groups, is one way to build leadership and thus the capacity of the organization. According to Dr. Joanne Sobeck of Wayne State University School of Social Work, “empowerment theory as it is applied to capacity building seeks to improve individual’s confidence and skills and increase the group’s capacity to accomplish its collective goals” (p. 21). Approaches to building leadership using the empowerment theory include educational workshops, training, coaching, and opportunities for “doing.” At its core, it is about teaching others to help themselves (Sobeck, 2007).

For organizations focused on social justice issues, part of the empowerment and leadership development process is teaching the issues at hand and reminding members of the power of the individual voice. Through a project for teaching New York high school students the impact of the Supreme Court decision on *Brown v. Board of Education*, for example, Colombia Teacher’s College students increased the sense of empowerment among participants. Although their goal was simply to build knowledge of the decision, it became a way for students to recognize their role in society and ability to create positive change. After the program, which included lectures, panel discussions, and small group reflection, students were surveyed to assess the impact of the event. These are some of the responses:

- “I liked the workshops. I’m going to become more involved in my community.’
- ‘I’m not involved but after these [workshops] I’ll make sure I volunteer for something that helps society.’
- ‘I think some of the most important messages the people who were speaking were trying to get across were no matter how young you are you have the power to change something.’

- ‘I loved them [the workshops] because they taught us how we can fight for what we want.’
- ‘I did and do like participating in the workshops because it gives me an idea of how to become a leader’
- ‘I learned about what took place on the past and learned new ways of how I can make a difference in life’
- ‘I liked how the speakers showed how the issues applied to us, and how it’s up to us to try and make a change... We can get involved in trying to improve society by being advocates and educate our schoolmates and community on the issues at hand that affect us’” (Walker, 2008, pp. 10-11)

These student participants, after being exposed to the history of the civil rights movement and the historical Supreme Court decision to end segregation in schools, realized the opportunity for their own involvement in social problems, despite their youth. Although not the core goal of the high school workshops, empowerment was a strong outcome. The students found their voice and made connections from history to current societal problems and their role in them. Beyond just making the connection, students actually cited activities through which they would get involved, like forming alliances, community service, writing letters or petitioning authority figures, and implementing solutions within their school. (Walker, 2008)

Evident through the Colombia Teacher’s College project is the significance of awareness and understanding of social issues for individual empowerment. Trainings and workshops that include such elements of teaching, reflection, and assessment, can be effective ways to increase leadership within grassroots organizations. Individuals who learn about social justice issues feel a responsibility and capability to make a difference, and begin to implement their new

knowledge, thus increasing individual leadership capacity. Taken together, many empowered individuals working toward a common goal yield a strong and successful organization.

Student Organization Models

The way in which a group organizes says a lot about their priorities; hierarchy, bureaucracy, and organization models affect the way members communicate and work together. Knowing that groups are more effective than individuals alone, expressed earlier through Witteborn's comment that "the vision of the global common good cannot only be accomplished by individuals but needs institutional support," it is important to maintain a healthy institution and create an environment conducive to teamwork and success (p.359).

Beginning an organization from scratch can be a challenge. There are many factors that make a group successful including a strong membership base, community network, legitimacy, effectiveness, good leadership, and cohesiveness. Typically, student organizations are run as miniature models of larger organizations, with a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer (if funding is a factor), and various other committees or positions targeted toward the organization's goals. Each position is given clear roles, but needs to be flexible enough for students to shape their own roles. Because student leadership positions have high turnover rates each year, the positions need to have both clear and flexible roles.

The current Student Organization Handbook provided by the Office of Student Life at Ball State University does not offer models by which to organize a student group. However, it does suggest that groups make goals, and gives suggestions on how to be effective leaders. Student organization models would be a helpful guide because the dynamics of organization determine how a group works together. The Oxfam America Clubs Toolkit, on the other hand, offered some helpful suggestions, at least for the main executive board positions. Under the

heading “Club Structure,” the toolkit suggests roles for the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, and also adds the caveat that “it is important for the club to share power among all members and give everyone a voice, but officers have certain duties to perform for the benefit of the entire club” (“Oxfam America Clubs Toolkit”). Depending on group dynamics and preference, student organizations can take the power-sharing suggestion seriously and ensure every person is heard within the organization, or else allow the leaders to run the organization without much consultation with members. While neither way is necessarily negative, it is important to remember that the group is only a collection of individuals until there are common goals and teamwork involved. Most groups fall somewhere between full distribution and concentration of decision-making power.

While still recognizing the importance of teamwork in an organization, it is the responsibility of those in leadership roles to ensure the health of the group, and to maintain a strong group-work dynamic. According to S.J. Zaccaro in a journal article on team leadership, those in positions of official leadership have the ability to influence the way the group functions as a whole. Leaders can influence members’ emotions, which can influence their effectiveness and ability to work as a team. Conflicts are normal, but it is up to the leader to create the environment, structure, and opportunity through which individuals can express their concerns. Zaccaro stresses the significance of the emotional tone within a team, and suggests that leaders should “facilitate healthy emotional climates in teams by fostering and encouraging norms moderating emotional expression” (Zaccaro, 2001, p. 473). By allowing room for emotions to be expressed and individuals to be heard, leaders can avoid enflamed conflict and help maintain a healthy group dynamic. If the leader is not effective in this way, emotions can influence a group from the bottom-up, as members with bad moods or attitudes can infect the rest of the group and

suppress the entire team's energy (Zaccaro, 2001, p. 473). So although teamwork is dependent on individuals being willing to work together and follow through on expectations, it is the responsibility of the leader to ensure the emotional climate of the group remains healthy, lest a bad situation or conflict contaminate the rest of the group's willingness to work together.

The way an organization is modeled is highly subjective and dependent on the organization's goals, but there are a few broad characteristics necessary to maintain a strong organization and cohesive group. According to a model specifically targeted to student organizations, developed by Robert K. Conyne, the core conditions for a functional group make the acronym CORE: Cohesion, Organization, Resourcefulness, and Energy (Conyne, 1983, p. 395). These conditions are wide-ranging, but they shape the goals behind which an organization is developed, and offer a way to measure the effectiveness of a current organizational model used within a group. Regardless of the details of the literal structure of the organization, a group must be able to work together and maintain strong relationships (cohesion), have clear goals and strategies for reaching those goals (organization), have the skills and ability to take the intermediate steps to reach those goals (resourcefulness), and the passion to complete projects and continue through difficult times (energy). Conyne also suggests that group success and member satisfaction are important pieces to a strong organization, but that they should be natural extensions of the club as long as the four core conditions are met (pp. 395-6).

Conyne's model is less dependent on specific leadership roles than on the work of the group as a whole. By claiming cohesion as the first condition for an effective organization, Conyne highlights the importance of avoiding petty dysfunction that can appear in a loosely joined group. When a group is cohesive, it is more likely to act as a team with a singular purpose instead of a collection of individuals with divergent interests. Also, by defining resourcefulness

as “composed of appropriate working knowledge and skills,” he stresses the need for each group member to have the ability to do the job required of them, whether that person is just a “list” member or a vital part of the executive board (Conyne, 1983, p. 395). If a group measures its skill level by the person with the lowest ability, just as a relay team is only as fast as its slowest runner, then group learning experiences and trainings become important factors for empowering the group as a whole. Finally, energy is the result of a collective passion for the goals and vision of the organization. Energy is the most difficult group characteristic to build because it must come from each person individually. It is difficult, in other words, to convince another person to be passionate about a subject. Rather, the group should ensure that each member is knowledgeable about the mission and attached to the cause through a cohesive group. Energy can be created if the group is cohesive, organized, well informed, and able. Research and knowledge can be a significant factor in building a person’s energy for an issue, especially when dealing with social injustices that are not well-known among the populous.

Student organizations are in a unique situation. As organizations with plentiful connections with researchers, professors, and higher education institutions, student groups have the ability to partner their work and goals with broader research, or use academics as a way to meet their goals. Nongovernmental Organizations that are part of a larger social movement, based on less-known facts are even better served by these connections. According to a reflection of a partnership between Oxfam America and the Latin American Studies Association, it is important to bridge activism and academics by “recognizing difference in order to bring people together” (Fox, 2006, p. 28). The author argues that research can be used as a way to incite people to sympathize with, or even join a social movement. “The link between ideas and action is often taken for granted, but... the first goal is to get people to say ‘ah-hah! – so that’s what’s

really going on” (Fox, 2006, p. 28). He goes on to suggest that research and knowledge is a way to motivate people to act on social problems. The second goal of academic-activism partnerships is to “serve as a guide for how to be *strategic* about public action by revealing where the pressure points in the system are” (Fox, 2006, p. 28). In other words, research can be a way to find the “cracks in the system” or the best avenue through which to push changes (Fox, 2006, p. 28). Research and academic knowledge can therefore either be a way to recruit members to the cause, or a way to learn the best strategies for creating change.

When incorporating research with activism however, it is important to make sure both groups feel equally appreciated and necessary. Fox suggested that if research appears to be the main goal then activists can feel simply like “instruments” rather than change-makers. Similarly, researchers must feel as if their work is being taken seriously and actually being implemented into the organization’s goals and strategies rather than a way to recruit more activists. Implemented correctly, building research connections with the organization can ultimately be advantageous for both parties’ goals.

Balancing all the elements of an organizational model is difficult, and requires dedication on the part of the organization leaders to ensure each condition for success is met. Whether a group has the typical structure with a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and general members or has all four executive board positions on top of a slew of other committee chairs, the most significant factor is how that group works together as a team. If the organization’s leaders lead knowing it is important to maintain cohesion, encourage communication, exploit resources and build the knowledge of each member to increase skills and maintain energy, then the organization will thrive regardless of the specific structural model used.

Oxfam America Student Organization

The previous sections on nongovernmental organizations, Oxfam America, social movements, student empowerment, student leadership, and organizational models, have been outlined to provide an analytical context for the following creative project. From the Oxfam America CHANGE leader training in July 2010, to the end of the spring semester in May 2011, I founded and managed an Oxfam America student organization at Ball State University aimed to run an Oxfam campaign on campus, increase students' understanding of global poverty, and build the leadership capacity of active student advocates on Ball State's campus. Having already outlined the CHANGE training in Boston, Massachusetts, the following section is my own experience with beginning and maintaining the Oxfam America chapter at Ball State. I will conclude with a serious reflection of the successes and challenges faced throughout the year, and briefly analyze the first year of the Oxfam America student organization through the context provided by the initial background information and literature review.

Getting Started

Before school began in August 2010, I spent time developing a plan of action for the year, as suggested by the leaders of the Oxfam America CHANGE training. Not knowing which Oxfam campaign students at Ball State would be most interested in, I created action plans for three different campaigns, including the "Right to Know, Right to Decide" campaign, which focuses on community rights in the face of oil and mining company projects, the "Rights in Crisis" campaign, which focuses on crisis prevention trainings and natural disaster relief, and the "Economic Justice" campaign which focuses on the international economy, trade, and foreign aid (*see Appendix B.1*). Each plan was similar in scope, the difference only being the content of

presentations and specific legislation. The action plans outlined long term objectives, intermediate and short term goals, and steps to achieve each.

The initial action plans served as a guide to help me recognize important stages to creating a legitimate organization, make goals, and commit to deadlines. They provided me with the flexibility to run different campaigns, and made my ideas possible by breaking them down into practical steps. The action plans also forced me to review the bureaucratic barriers I had to overcome in order to become a recognized organization at Ball State University. In the steps for the shorter goals for example, I had to write a constitution and apply for recognition through the Student Life office.

In order to gauge my approach and ensure I was on track to create a lasting and successful campus organization, I was also required to fill out a more extensive action plan to turn in to Oxfam America for the CHANGE program (*see Appendix A.1*). This longer action plan emphasized relationships between organization leaders and influential people in the university, and used the SWOT method for analyzing organizational needs. In the SWOT method, organizations analyze their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in order to recognize weak points and challenges as well as achievements and possibilities. By emphasizing relationships, the action plan prompted me to pinpoint constituents, supporters, opponents, resource personnel, and influential staff persons who may be able to provide assistance.

When beginning a new organization on a college campus there are a few initial steps to take including recruitment, advertising, finding space to meet, developing a presentation to introduce the organization's mission, and drafting a constitution. The action plan proved useful because it provided an immediate tool for locating people on campus who could help with these immediate steps. The Student Life administration and staff in the Honors College were the most

helpful by providing the Student Organization Handbook which outlined the rules and steps for becoming a recognized organization, and offering to send mass emails about the first informational meeting.

The first requirement to become a recognized student organization at Ball State University is to find a faculty advisor. Finding an advisor was not difficult because the Oxfam America CHANGE program already required an advisor, which I had established when applying for the program. Dr. Kathy Smith, Associate Director of Student Life, agreed to be my advisor for the CHANGE program as well as the Ball State chapter of Oxfam America. As faculty advisor, Dr. Smith would be responsible for signing contracts, monitoring the progress of the Oxfam organization, and generally act as the campus liaison for the organization.

Soon after securing an advisor I drafted a constitution based on the Student Life guidelines, which outlined officer positions, member requirements, and the purpose and mission of the organization (*see Appendix B.2*). Thanks to the helpful guidelines in the Student Life Handbook, the constitutional draft was not difficult. After sending the draft to Dr. Smith to read over and approve, I submitted the constitution for approval by the Student Activities Committee. One of the challenges of beginning an organization is that you cannot reserve classrooms for meetings or participate in university sponsored events like the activity fair, until the constitution has been approved. Because of these restrictions, planning an informational meeting and recruiting members proved difficult. The action plan I had drawn up and connections I had made with staff helped me find ways to recruit and begin meeting before the organization was formally recognized.

In addition to writing the constitution to become a recognized student organization, I also had to set a date and location for an informational meeting, advertise, and prepare a presentation

for interested students. Eager to begin, I set the date for the first meeting on September 21st at 5:00pm in Bracken Library study room 401, which holds about 16 people. Unlike classrooms, library study rooms are available for reservation by any student, so I was able to make a reservation without having a recognized organization. Once the room was reserved I created a flyer and drafted an email to announce the meeting (*see Appendix B.4*). I was able to send the email to all Honors College members through my connection with Dr. Barb Stedman, who had suggested I apply for the Oxfam America CHANGE Initiative the previous spring. In addition to sending the email, I posted flyers around campus and in academic buildings.

I spent a lot of time preparing for the first meeting, in order to come across as professional and passionate about starting an Oxfam chapter at Ball State. To that end, I created a meeting outline, fact sheet about Oxfam America and their campaigns, membership forms, and email sign-up sheet (*see Appendix B.5*). I also planned to explain the first event I hoped to hold with the organization and have interested students sign up for executive board positions. As per the drafted constitution, the executive board positions that needed filling included President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. If nothing else, I wanted to gather contact information and teach students about the issues Oxfam cares about, and how they could help.

The first meeting went better than expected. About twenty people attended the informational meeting, and by the end I collected sixteen membership forms, twenty email addresses, and had at least one name down for each of the executive board positions available. We also chose weekly meeting times. Although the meeting was at 5:00pm that evening, some of the students felt that 7:00pm would be better suited to their schedules. In order to compromise then, we decided to alternate meeting times every Tuesday between 5pm and 7pm. Although it seems trivial, I realized that an important aspect of creating a club is deciding how often to meet.

If a group meets too often for its purposes, members may lose interest because the meetings are boring, or feel unproductive. If a group meets too scarcely, members may feel confused or out of the loop. When beginning the organization I felt that meeting once a week was the best option. Although we wouldn't be planning an event every week, there were enough social justice topics that Oxfam covers to at least spend each meeting discussing issues around the world and what Oxfam does about it. Much of our discussions delve into the complexity of poverty and why the events we hold and legislation we push for is important. I also felt that meeting once a week would give members a routine to follow, whereas every other week can get confusing, and any less would yield few results. I added into the constitution the fact we would meet weekly, and also added the caveat that executive board members could add or subtract meetings as they saw fit, which gave the organization flexibility for slow and busy times of the year.

The meetings were organized in the same general format every week. First we played an icebreaker game, or an activity that would get people talking and help members get to know one another. It was meant both to "break the ice," as well as create a sense of camaraderie and unity within the group. After the ice breakers, we took time to learn about a current event or social justice issue in the world. Some days it was a rather short presentation on recent events, while other days we covered complex issues like why developing countries are dependent on foreign aid. I tried to have other people teach the class about these topics, and second semester we decided to rotate the task among executive board members, which seemed to be the best solution. After having an educational session, we moved into any business necessary for the day, such as event planning, brainstorming, reviewing past events, signing up for volunteer times, or taking a political action.

Through the membership forms that each person filled out, I gathered information on students' majors, year in school, how they heard about the meeting, and their interest in joining Oxfam America at Ball State University. I also used the chance at the first meeting to assess interest in the various Oxfam campaigns. The CHANGE training taught me that focusing on one campaign is more effective, and makes it easier for others to see the difference you are making. I also thought it would be more effective to let the organization's potential members decide on the focus for the year. By empowering them to make decisions from the beginning, I was able to foster a sense of ownership and dedication to the campaign. Common sense dictates that people are more dedicated to projects they understand and are interested in. Therefore, using the fact sheet I created for students, I introduced each of the three campaigns Oxfam was running at the time: "Rights in Crisis" which focuses on disaster relief and prevention, "Right to Know, Right to Decide," which focuses on community rights in the face of oil and mining projects, and "Economic Justice," which focuses on justice in the international political economy, trade, and foreign aid sectors.

I immediately knew I had made the right decision by letting interested students choose the campaign. Although my first choice for a campaign focus was the "Right to Know, Right to Decide" campaign, the students decided instead on the "Economic Justice" campaign in an almost unanimous decision. Had I chosen the campaign and led top-down, I likely would not have generated as much future participation.

I tried to keep a positive attitude and keep in mind that beginning a student organization can be a long and difficult process. My goal for the first meeting was to get about five or six interested students. I kept my expectations low because I knew that aiming low and being surprised was better than aiming high and being disappointed. Fortunately or unfortunately, the

high turnout at the informational meeting caused me to set my expectations higher. I hoped for the best for the rest of the semester.

Stand Up For Poverty Event

In addition to the logistics of the organization and campaigns, I also used the first meeting to recruit people for a simple, yet significant event. Oxfam America as a whole was participating in a “Stand up for Poverty” movement on September 17th, and they asked CHANGE leaders to join if possible. The event was centered on gathering people together to show solidarity in various ways to demonstrate strength in numbers and support for the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals, as we explained them to students, include the following:

1. Eradicate poverty and hunger; halve the number of people living on less than \$1/day
2. Achieve Universal Primary Education
3. Promote Gender Equality
4. Reduce Child Mortality
5. Improve Maternal Health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure Environmental Sustainability; reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water
8. Create a Global Partnership for Development; develop effective aid and trade programs (“Millennium Development Goals”)

Oxfam America at the time was also pushing a petition to send to President Obama, urging him to create a United States Global Development Policy which would outline a specific national strategy to meeting the eight goals (*see Appendix A.2*). Although the Millennium Development Goals were approved by all nations in 2000 and proposed to be reached by 2015, the United States never published a strategy for reaching the goals. Because Oxfam’s goals lined up with the “Stand up for Poverty” event, they chose to mobilize constituents on that day.

Having been informed of this event by Will Fenton, Oxfam's Economic Justice Campaign organizer, I hoped to hold a photo petition on campus as the first official Oxfam America sponsored event at Ball State. The general idea for the event was simple. Create signs that say something like "I support a U.S. Global Development Strategy to fight poverty," and have volunteers find students to take their picture with the sign and sign the paper petition. The idea seemed to go over well with the people at the first informational meeting, so we decided to spend the second meeting preparing for the event after we elected the executive board.

The second meeting was less involved than the first, because most of the paperwork was completed at the informational meeting. About twelve people came to the second meeting to vote for executive board positions and assist with event preparations. The first thing we did in the meeting was read through the millennium development goals and discuss what they meant, and why a Global Development Policy was important to reaching them. In order to make the meeting a little more involved, I cut the Millennium Development Goals into sections and passed them around for people to read. That way I was not the only one speaking at the meeting. After we went through a discussion of the goals and the petition, we held elections for the executive board.

Although I had founded the organization, I offered to let other people run for the position of President. Nobody else ran for the position however, so I was voted President by default. The positions of Secretary and Vice President were won by Jackie Arroyo and Ellen Weld respectively. Elections for the Treasurer position led to the election of Kelly Hollander.

After that business was taken care of and the new executive board was congratulated for their selection, we set to work preparing for the photo petition to be held that following Friday, September 17th. We agreed to divide into groups of two, one to hold the camera, and the other to carry the posters and petitions. Beside the practical reasons, dividing in twos helped the members

get to know one another. The event was to be held 10am to 2pm, and each group chose a specific location on campus to collect pictures and signatures. We thought that by splitting up we would be able to collect many more signatures than if we stayed in one location. It was also necessary to hold the event in a more divided manner, because without official recognition I could not request a venue on campus at which to hold a student organization event. The photo petition was unique because we took the event to students, rather than ask students to come to the event.

That Friday each group went to their assigned locations on campus to collect signatures and take pictures. We also handed out flyers about the event and the new Oxfam organization at Ball State (*see Appendix B.3*). There were a total of five groups at different times on campus, and we collected a grand total of 376 signatures and around fifty photos (some with more than one person). The petitions were then sent to the Oxfam America office in Boston, to be forwarded on to the Obama Administration in Washington, DC. The event was tremendously successful. Although we had set a goal of 500 signatures, we were all satisfied with our success, and celebrated at the following meeting.

In a lucky chance of fate, Oxfam's campaign for a U.S. Global Development Policy was successful, and the Obama Administration unveiled the policy on September 22nd, soon after we had held the event and sent our petition signatures to Oxfam's Boston office. The quick turnaround and impressive campaign success was helpful to our efforts as a small organization on Ball State's campus. To have that kind of success so quickly is unrealistic, and while it did not increase our expectations of our national impact, it definitely brought a sense of connection with a much larger movement.

Sow the Seed Event

The month of October brought a new project, and more success. The constitution was reviewed by the Student Activities Committee, and although it was not ratified due to some suggested changes, we were given permission to reserve classrooms for meetings. The constitution would have to be altered slightly and reviewed by the Director of Student Life, Lynda Wiley. Because the changes were minor, it did not require the entire Student Activities Committee for endorsement. About a week later, before our third meeting, we were given space in the Whiting Business Building, room 139 for the 7:00pm meetings, and room 152 for our 5:00pm meetings, for the remainder of the semester. Having those classrooms reserved was extraordinarily helpful to our organization, because I no longer had to request library study rooms each week that are not always available.

It wasn't long after celebrating the success of our first event that the Oxfam team in Boston asked us to help with another event. October 16th is "World Food Day," and as a way to organize for their "Sow the Seed" project under the Economic Justice campaign, they asked us to hold an event that day, or sometime close to that date. According to worldfooddayusa.com, "World Food Day, October 16th, is a worldwide event designed to increase awareness, understanding, and informed, year-around action to alleviate hunger" ("About Us"). Because part of Oxfam's mission is to create solutions to hunger, it was only natural to use the event to push for legislation that would alleviate hunger.

The Oxfam "Sow the Seed Campaign" was created to push for new climate legislation at the upcoming UN Climate Summit in Cancun. In addition, the Sow the Seed campaign aimed to gather support for Senate bill 384 called the "Global Food Security Act," sponsored by Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana, and Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania. Among other things, the bill

proposed to designate one person to orchestrate all anti-hunger projects put forth by various federal agencies to ensure a more cohesive and effective anti-hunger plan. Together, the climate fund and the Global Food Security Act would help developing countries preserve food security when affected by climate change and emergencies. (“U.S. Senator”)

At Ball State we had to decide how to help Oxfam’s efforts on World Food day. October 16th fell on a Saturday, when most students are off campus or at home, making planning an event more difficult. After brainstorming we decided that the best way to hold an event without worrying about advertising costs and other constraints was to take the event to the students (similar to our theory behind the US Global Development Policy photo petition). October 16th happened to be the day of a home football game, so we decided that as a group we could run a table on the tailgate field before the football game started. There are always a lot of students and community members that tailgate before games, so we thought it would be an effective location.

Tailgating was going to be held from 10am to 1pm that day. At our meetings leading up to the event, we discussed who would be attending to assist, and what activity we could host that might bring people in to talk to us. Oxfam America’s headquarters was holding a contest for the group that came up with the most creative Sow the Seed event, so while we were brainstorming we specifically tried to make the project more creative than we normally would. After brainstorming for creative ideas, we chose to make a sheet with a globe outlined on it. We would then let people use paint to make a handprint on the sheet to “make their mark on the world.” Everyone in the group agreed that finger painting was a great idea. About five people agreed to help who were available for the day, so we went ahead and made plans for the event. The organization’s secretary, Jackie Arroyo, bought the materials for the finger painting; Vice

President Ellen Weld drew the globe outline on the sheet; and I put in a request to borrow two six foot tables from University Facilities for the weekend.

After notifying Oxfam America of our plan for the event, they sent us their specific Sow the Seed campaign materials, including postcards to be sent to our Senators that affirmed support for the international climate fund and Global Food Security Act (*see Appendix A.3*). Each person was to fill out two postcards, one for each senator. On the postcard they were supposed to write down their name, address and email address, so that the Senators could send replies to them, and so that Oxfam had record of supporters. In addition to Oxfam's campaign materials, I also created a tri-fold that could be used to advertise for our Oxfam America organization while tailgating and at other times to advertise the remainder of the year.

On October 16th, three of us met at 9am to head over to the tailgate field to set up. We set up one table with information about our club and informational material on Oxfam America, climate change, and hunger, and set up another table with the globe banner and finger paint materials. After about a half hour we realized that few people were walking up to our table, and that most families and groups tended to keep to themselves. In order to make sure our event was still successful, and that we got signatures on the Sow the Seed postcards to help Oxfam's national efforts to push for the two political actions, we took to the field with our postcards.

Once more people from the Oxfam club arrived to help us table, we broke into groups and walked around to ask for signatures. We were surprised at how receptive people were to our cause. We asked them to fill out a postcard to help fight hunger by investing in agriculture in developing countries, and read them the postcard. By the time we left at one, we had collected 160 postcards - two postcards each from 80 different people. Our goal was 100 people, but we felt that we came close enough to call the event successful. We also had about ten people come

to our table to put their handprint down and learn about our club, which we also thought was a good way to introduce people to the issues without asking them to take legislative action. By the end we felt that the event had been a success. Holding the event at the tailgate field was helpful because it required little planning and supplies, and it was effective because we were able to collect postcards from 80 people simply by walking around and asking.

The next week we reviewed the event and celebrated our success. The postcards were scanned and copies were sent to Oxfam's Boston office, and we kept the originals to send to our senators' Indiana offices. Two weeks after the event, we were notified by Oxfam's Boston office that we won the award for having the most creative Sow the Seed event, and were sent a \$125 Visa gift card to use at an ethical eatery of our choice. So far, our events were going very well.

Hunger Banquet

The Oxfam America Hunger Banquet is one of Oxfam's most well-known and influential events for fundraising and education. It involves a banquet at which individuals are randomly separated into three income categories. The top 15 percent of individuals are upper-class, the middle 35 percent are middle-class, and the other 50 percent are low-income. Dinner is served at the event, with the catch that guests will be served according to their randomly assigned income level.

The Hunger Banquet is traditionally held around the time of the American Thanksgiving to add an element of comparison. We held our hunger banquet on November 18th, the Thursday before Thanksgiving, from 4:30 to 6:30pm. We chose to focus the Hunger Banquet on the Pakistan Floods which had occurred earlier that year, and how climate change and natural disasters can impact hunger and poverty. The event was held in the Pittenger Student Center Ballroom on Ball State's campus, and was open to the public.

On Friday, November 5th I held a meeting in the library with people who could volunteer at the Hunger banquet. At that meeting we established a set schedule for the evening, determined some changes for the suggested script and watched two videos about the Pakistan Floods to show at the event. We also created a flyer to advertise for the banquet (*see Appendix B.7 and B.8*). While planning, we divided up roles for the script and practiced our parts one time in groups and on our own. There were about five readers for the script because it is fairly lengthy, and also because as President I wanted to give people substantial roles so they could feel like a part of the team. I also assigned individuals to welcoming guests and showing them to their space, a couple to lead a small group reflection period, a person to explain the Pakistan Floods, and a person to digitally document the event with pictures and video.

To make the income discrepancy clear at the event, high-income guests were escorted to a section of tables with plates, napkins, cups, and had a full sandwich, cookies and punch; middle-income guests were asked to sit on chairs in another section, and when asked got up to collect a piece of bread and butter, and juice; low-income guests, the largest section, had to sit on the floor between the other income groups, and were only allowed a small serving of bread and water. Only the upper-class could ask and receive second helpings.

A script for the Hunger Banquet is provided by Oxfam America, and can be adapted for each event to explain the different income levels and lifestyles (*see Appendix A.6*). The script teaches how individuals may move up and down the socioeconomic ladder, what the lowest class has to deal with each day to find food and support themselves economically, how middle class individuals can sometimes slip into the lower class, and how the upper class spends its disposable income. The evening included the full script reading, dinner, a small group reflection period led by two Oxfam members, a period in which I spoke about the impact of the Pakistan

Floods and how climate change impacts poverty, and finally an ‘action’ period, during which students were informed about Senator Lugar’s Global Food Security Act and could write letters to Indiana Senator Dan Coats or Representative Mike Pence to encourage them to co-sponsor the bill. An Oxfam fact sheet about the Pakistan floods was also handed out (*see Appendix A.5*).

Approximately fifty students attended the Hunger Banquet, and although we planned for one hundred guests, we felt that the event was still a success. As the first hunger banquet held on campus, we were able to raise awareness about international hunger issues, climate change, and encourage approximately 30 students to take action by writing letters to their Congressional representatives. Students interviewed after the event expressed that they learned a lot and were excited about actually taking action to help make a difference. The interviews can be found on YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IqJEFZ9CYs&feature=channel_video_title.

One major challenge we faced was cost. Because we held the event in the Pittenger Student Center Ballroom, we were required to use University Catering for any refreshments. Usually a Hunger Banquet consists of a gourmet three-course meal for the upper-class, a buffet of rice and beans for the middle class, and rice and water for the lower class. Because we had very little money as a new organization, we had to simplify the event. Instead of the usual meal, we used cubed bread for the lower class, bread and butter for the middle class, and Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwiches, juice, and cookies for the upper class. Nevertheless, because few people in the audience had attended a Hunger Banquet in the past, the menu changes went unnoticed.

At the end of the year we concluded that the Hunger Banquet was one of our best events, and there was some consensus that it should become an annual event. The hope is that in the future more students will attend, and eventually get involved in international hunger issues.

Lobby Visits

In the fall, Oxfam America engaged the CHANGE Leaders, Action Corps groups and volunteers in a coordinated lobby event around the “Sow the Seed” campaign. The idea was for small groups to meet with their Senators about the Global Climate Summit in Cancun, which was being held on November 29th. Oxfam claimed that there was not enough funding for international climate change adaptation, and was disappointed that already promised funding was not being delegated. At each lobby meeting, groups were to present a “Sow the Seed” display of small seedlings in a tray, a small garden harrow or spade, and a garden glove. In the seedling tray, there was to be a few small seedlings popping out, and two plant tags with information about new agricultural technologies used in developing nations. Each part of the display represented part of the rationale for funding.

For this event we decided to get in touch with the Indianapolis Action Corps team. Together with Action Corps leader Kristin Clements-Effner, we were able to hold two lobby meetings on Friday November 18th. The first meeting was held with Andrew Homan, District Director for Senator Evan Bayh, and the second with Lane Ralph, the Deputy State Director for Senator Lugar. This was a fantastic opportunity to get involved and lobby with our legislators, but due to the drive to Indianapolis and the time of the meetings, only Oxfam member Sarah Janiga and I were able to attend, along with Miss Clements-Effner.

Our primary ask in the first meeting was for Senator Bayh to urge President Obama to support US promises regarding the Global Climate Fund to be discussed in Cancun. The office did not make any commitments to write a letter to President Obama, but did say that the postcards and information we delivered would be given to the Senator on November 23rd, as he was coming to town with President Obama for an event.

Senator Bayh was undecided on the issue. Mr. Homan was skeptical that the Global Climate Fund commitment would be met due the recent Deficit Reduction Report and the willingness of Congress to make any additional appropriations. He stated that Congress would most likely be more susceptible to respond to requests that would allow current funding to be utilized more efficiently with better results. We left a plant tray, with seeds, tools, and other materials provided. We also gave press clips, Sow the Seed postcards and a listing of names that took online action provided by Oxfam, and sent a thank you card.

In our second meeting with Lane Ralph, Deputy State Director for Senator Lugar, our primary ask was for Senator Lugar to urge President Obama to meet US commitments towards the Global Climate Fund in Cancun that next week. Mr. Ralph also did not commit to having Senator Lugar write a letter, but did say he would give our information to him to review our request for action.

Mr. Ralph seemed to be on the defensive the entire meeting. He did say that this was not an area he has monitored closely and that the information would be passed on the appropriate individuals. During the meeting Mr. Ralph did attempt to contact Aaron Whitesell to discuss the Global Food Security Act, but stated that the bill was going nowhere this year. Just as we had in Senator Bayh's office, we left a plant tray, tools and other materials provided by Oxfam. We also provided press pieces, Sow the Seed postcards, and list of names that took online action provided by Oxfam, which Miss Clements-Effner had compiled. A thank you card was provided.

I felt overall that the meetings had gone well. It was great exposure for me and Sarah Janiga to attend a real lobby meeting and learn how citizens can engage representatives on legislative and global issues. I am unsure whether Senator Lugar or Senator Bayh took any concrete action as we asked, but I am optimistic that the information was at least relayed to the

right staff members. My hope is not only that our Senators took our information seriously, but also that Sarah Janiga and I can pass on our experience to others and encourage more Ball State Oxfam members to engage in similar meetings in the future.

Planning the Second Semester

When planning the second semester, I tried to put more strategy into what events were held and why. First we developed a new flyer to advertise for the second semester, and posted it around campus, having learned in the first semester that advertising and recruiting was always a must (*see Appendix B.6*). Keeping the members informed was also important. At the start of the first meeting that spring, I introduced everyone to Oxfam using a PowerPoint presentation, and gave them a sheet of facts which will not only inform them, but also help them teach others about the problems of hunger, poverty, and the roles of women and climate change in the world. The back of the sheet outlined the spring petition, which was a plea for leaders to make it a priority to support women farmers in developing countries (*see Appendix A.4*).

The most important change I made in the second semester was to include more education about the Oxfam campaigns and petition legislation. I knew that in order to be an effective leader I had to listen to the members and adjust my management style accordingly, and many expressed a desire for more education. I therefore made it a priority that everyone understood the topics we would be working on that semester. Another way I felt I could be of assistance was to stay organized and accountable, so I passed out a calendar for the semester outlining what we planned to be involved with. I hoped that calendars would help each member plan for events, as well as give them a better idea of the goals for the semester.

Overall, the first meeting of the spring semester went well. Three new students attended and filled out forms to become members, and another two students committed to being more

involved. By the end of the meeting, I felt that the new educational components of meetings would help quite a bit, and in order to ensure that each member felt involved and appreciated, I asked the Vice President to be in charge of creating thank you cards for students who help at events or go out of their way to assist the organization.

On January 10th I met with the rest of the Executive Board to review the plan for the semester and distribute roles. We would be focusing again on legislation that dealt with foreign aid to combat hunger and build food security, this time focused on women food producers. We set a goal of securing 500 signatures on the "Support Women Farmers" petition, and outlined a strategy by which we could potentially achieve that goal. From an administrative point of view, we also decided to alternate responsibility for the agenda and educational component of the meetings. Sharing responsibility would help reduce the amount of work for each of us, as well as keep the executive board members feeling involved and important.

Muncie Children's Museum - Service Event

One of the goals for the second semester was to foster a better sense of community among the Oxfam members; so on Saturday January 22nd, nine members from Oxfam volunteered at the Muncie Children's Museum for two hours and then went out for lunch. Earlier in the year we won an award for the most creative sow the seed event, and were sent \$125 dollars to celebrate at an environmentally friendly restaurant. We chose to spend the money at a restaurant called 2(oh!)4, a restaurant in downtown Muncie that uses fresh organic ingredients from the farmer's market.

All of the members enjoyed the time at the museum. In order to tie in the Oxfam theme, we organized a world-focused craft for kids that included gluing continents onto a circle and adding animals and people to show diversity and collectivism. During our time only about four

children made a craft, but the point of the event was both to get involved in the community and help the members bond in an informal setting.

The event was a success because it helped the members bond on a new level, a factor that is important when planning events in groups. I was skeptical of the importance of holding activities that were not directly related to the organization's goals, but it turned out to be an important turning point in retention rates and involvement. I did decide however, that a volunteer experience more relevant to Oxfam's mission would be more effective as a learning experience.

Petition Contest

Because we had not done as much tabling and petition-gathering in the Spring Semester, I decided to hold a spontaneous event during one of our regular meetings. One day in February, we went through our meeting as usual and I saved time at the end to hold a contest. I had each of the members pair up into groups of two or three, gave them each a few sheets of the "Support Women Farmers" petition, and had them go collect as many signatures as they could in a half hours' time.

My goal for this event was less actually collecting the signatures and more about getting all of the members involved. Some of them had not been able to attend events throughout the year, and since my goal for the semester was to make the members feel more ownership of the programs I wanted to do something during a meeting that would make them feel involved. In order to add to the competition and the fun, the prize for the winning team was a box of Girl Scout Thin Mint cookies.

The other strategy for holding the petition spontaneously was to show the members how easy it can be to make a difference. In a half hours' time we collectively gathered 42 signatures

of support of an initiative to help women farmers. I hope I made an impact on the members of Oxfam with that small event.

Rankin Photo Exhibit – “From Congo with Love”

Oxfam America had been given the rights to display a photo exhibit created by Thomas Rankin, a famous British photographer. The exhibit was made up of portraits of Congolese people in front of a white background. Hosting the photos was meant to raise awareness of the brutal civil war occurring in the Congo, which has killed over five million people since it began in 1998. The actual pictures that Oxfam had were blown up versions of the pictures about four feet by six feet large. The original intention was to hold this event in the fall, but during the dates that I had requested, the photos were being shipped to California for an event. Determined to host the pictures at Ball State however, I tried again in the spring with success.

The photos were available for our use from March 21st to March 25th under the condition that we had a space confirmed for their viewing and signed a release form making us responsible for any substantial damage to the photos (*see Appendix B.9*). Before Oxfam would agree to ship us the photos, they had to receive the release form with the appropriate information about where they would be displayed, how many people would view them, and a signed agreement to the terms of responsibility.

This event was the most challenging and disappointing of the entire year. Finding space on campus to display the ten large photos was incredibly difficult, and it was the organization's first real experience in campus bureaucracy and departmental confusion. In order to ensure the safety of the photographs with minimal supervision, we looked into setting up the exhibit in Bracken Library, the Museum of Art, or the display room in front of the Student Life office. When we first called Bracken Library they told us to contact the Social Work department who

has done library displays, but when we called them they told us to contact Charlie Scofield, who does all of the location reservations for student organizations. Upon contacting Charlie, he suggested we contact the Art Museum, who told us to contact Bracken Library. Finally, when we contacted the Library for the second time, they referred us to the Historical Archives department, which had its own glass display cases and was willing to host our photos for the appropriate dates. After I got permission from the Archives department, I filled out the release form and faxed it to Oxfam's headquarters in Boston. We quickly received approval for the photos, which were to arrive on March 20th to my hall by FedEx. Everything seemed to finally be coming together.

The day I was to set up the display, it rained. Determined to take the photos to the library and set them up however, I made a tarp out of trash bags and taped it over the cart for protection. After taking the photos to the library and up to the second floor where the Archives department was, I was assisted by a staff member to set up the display. To make matters worse, the photographs did not fit. They were about two inches too tall to fit in the glass display cases.

Not to be dismayed, I put the tarp over the cart, took them to the Student Life office at the other end of campus, and explained my situation to the staff at the Office of Student Life. They graciously allowed me to store the photos and the cart outside their office until I could secure another location for display. I then called the Museum of Art and the Rinker center for International Studies, and also discussed the possibility of setting up the photos in the art gallery just outside of the Office of Student Life, which at that time, was empty.

The Rinker center and the Art Museum both denied the request, and the Office of Student Life said that they could not display art in the gallery because of earlier complaints that led to a decision not to host art in that area anymore. Finally, a staff member in the Student Life office

suggested I set them up in their conference room. Her supervisor approved, and they were finally put to use.

The advertisement on Facebook about the event directed people to the library, and had to be changed to direct them to a conference room behind the ironically empty art gallery in the Student Life office. Regardless of the changes made on the advertisement, only about twenty people total saw the photo exhibit because of the poor location and sudden move.

All in all it was a disaster. From the incredible bureaucracy we discovered when trying to display the photos, to the size being incorrect and the location changed, the Rankin photos were not used effectively. Comforted only by the fact that I had little control over the events that had unfolded, I packed up the photographs less than a week later, and shipped them on to their next location hoping they would have more luck than we had.

Peace Fair

Holding a Peace Fair was an event we brainstormed at the beginning of the spring semester. The idea was to hold an outdoor event where all the social justice organizations on campus could come together and advertise their groups, spread awareness about important topics in peace and social justice, and put on an event that would be both fun and educational.

Logistically this event was fairly simple. We had to find an outdoor space on campus large enough to accommodate five small student organizations, tables, and activities; contact student social justice organizations to gauge interest and availability; plan activities; propose a budget to Student Government Association to pay for those activities; advertise; and finally hold the event. However, finding an outdoor space was difficult only a month before the end of the school year. The university was drilling on the grounds in preparation for a geothermal energy plant, and planning and set-up for graduation limited the number of outdoor spaces available on

campus. After a time of bargaining, we were granted space on the University Green in the center of campus to hold our event. The location was perfect because of its high visibility and moderate pedestrian traffic between classes.

The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies heard about our plans for the event and decided to collaborate with us for an event they were also holding that day. The Peace Center was planning a flash mob at which students and faculty from the university would gather somewhere and create a human peace sign, and take a picture. It was designed to gather support and advertisement for the Peace Center, as well as raise awareness of the fact that April is historically a violent month. The Peace Center advertised their event through email and tabling on campus, and planned to hold the flash mob at noon on April 13th. We also advertised for the flash mob and Peace Fair through flyers that we posted around campus (*see Appendix B.10*). We agreed it would be a good kick-off to the Peace Fair, which we planned to hold from 1 to 4pm.

After sending an email to social justice-related campus groups, I received confirmation of participation from four campus groups including Free the Slaves, Students for Peace in Israel and Palestine, the Social Justice League, and Amnesty International. They each came up with activities to do and sent me a cost estimate of supplies. In order to pay for the event, I developed an itemized budget and submitted a request to the Ball State Student Government Association for co-sponsorship (*see Appendix B.11*).

The budget was approved by Student Government at the end of March, and each campus organization purchased their supplies with the assurance of reimbursement from the Student Government Association. The only stipulation made by using SGA funds is that lobbying is not allowed and all advertisements must recognize SGA co-sponsorship of the event. Although that limited Oxfam from gathering signatures on the “support women farmers” petition, our chapter

felt that the publicity gained from the event would be worth the limitation. Once we received approval for the budget, we began to advertise the fair through a Facebook event, paper flyers and emails.

Two weeks prior to the Peace Fair, I sent out an email to each organization stipulating the expectations for the event, and reviewed the details to limit confusion on the day of. I also attached the flyer in the email for each participating organization to help advertise and bring more students to the event (*see Appendix B.12*).

On the day of the event, each organization set up a table on the University Green dedicated to their cause and an activity that would get people engaged. Amnesty International and Students for Peace in Israel and Palestine both painted murals at their tables to symbolize peace and human rights, the Social Justice League furnished Henna tattoo art for students, Free the Slaves offered face painting, and Oxfam America offered do-it-yourself tie-dye bandannas and a photo shoot in front of a sign that said “ending poverty starts with...” We also set up a general station for coloring, and making god’s eyes. Finally, thanks to the Peace Center, we had a drum circle and a small woodwind quartet who came to the fair to provide music.

Over the course of the four hour event I estimated that about 200 students participated, not including the many who participated in the peace sign flash mob with the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies. The Peace Fair was a much better success than the Rankin photo exhibit, and I felt that although it did not include any direct action, it was our most successful event of the year. By collaborating with other campus groups and demonstrating how students at Ball State can get involved in social justice issues, we were able to reach a much bigger audience than any of the groups could on its own. As students walked through campus, they were able to see a variety of social justice groups, sign up for club email updates, and learn how to get involved.

Invisible Children Event

Although the semester was already winding down in April, we decided to get involved in one last event. The Free the Slaves campus organization on campus had arranged for a team from Invisible Children, a nongovernmental organization devoted to helping child soldiers in Uganda, to present their new documentary on campus. The documentary, titled *Tony*, is about the experience of a young Ugandan boy who grew up dealing with incredible violence. He eventually began to help Invisible Children further their cause. The documentary showing was held on Tuesday, April 26th in the Student Center ballroom.

Although the documentary was not related directly to the campaign we were running on campus, we decided it was a good last ditch effort to advertise for our organization and offer an alternative way to make an impact besides donating to Invisible Children or joining the campus Free the Slaves organization. Because Invisible Children is a well-known international nongovernmental organization, we felt the audience would be receptive to learning more about the (less well-known) Oxfam America organization as well. The event was primarily organized by Free the Slaves, which meant our duties were only to help advertise around campus and table at the actual event. Approximately 200 students attended the event, and by the end of the evening around 30 students learned of our organization at the Oxfam America table. We had successfully completed the final event.

Passing the Torch

The end of the year warranted a hard-earned pizza party and new executive board elections for the following year. As the founder of the organization, it was important to ensure that the Oxfam America Ball State Chapter would continue and flourish in new hands. The constitution mandated a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer as the executive

board, in addition to any committee chairs needed to maintain an efficient and operational organization. In direct defiance of the constitution however, I chose to allow the members to run for any position through which they felt they could make an impact, even if that position was not yet official.

As a result, the new Executive Board consists of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Media Relations Coordinator, Social Outreach Chair, and Webmaster. The new executive board is bigger by two people this year, but with a strong President and more people directly accountable to the functions of the organization, I believe they will be more effective. In addition, because each position is designed purposely to fit each individual's strengths, the duties of each respective board member will be executed with more passion and aptitude than they would if electing a board member into a position for which he or she is not suited.

We planned to hold a strategic planning meeting with the new executive board to outline expectations at the beginning of the next year, reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the previous year, and create goals for the new academic year. In order to assist the new President with her duties, I also organized and handed over a binder that would be helpful to the newest leader of the Oxfam America Ball State Chapter. At that point, the duties of my presidency and leadership were over, and the Oxfam America student organization at Ball State was ready for the next challenge.

Reflection and Conclusion

According to Robert Conyne, student organizations are extraordinarily important to the college experience; not only because they teach students teamwork, but because they are so pervasive in college life. “They are a significant aspect of student life on most college and university campuses in terms of their numbers, areas in which they function, the quantity of students participating in them, and the number of activities they sponsor” (Conyne, 1983, p. 394). These student organizations can be harnessed and used effectively as models for deliberate student development and preparation for future careers as they build leadership, teamwork, and education about issues related to the students’ own interests. By founding the Oxfam America student organization, I was able to harness that potential as well as create a force for change by empowering members to spread awareness and lead an anti-poverty campaign for Oxfam America.

The empowerment theory for grassroots movements stressed the importance of teaching others to lead so that the movement could spread and thrive. I made an effort to empower the members of the immediate organization so they could teach other students about the importance of international aid and personal action. The comments made by students after the Hunger Banquet in November, 2010 in the represent the beginning of that empowerment process.

- “I really enjoyed [the Hunger Banquet]. I thought it really got the point across to show that poverty is a problem... and to let us know that we can make a difference.”
- “I feel like I am more informed to help out in the world, and I can definitely make more informed decisions as far as passing legislation is concerned.” (“Hunger Banquet”)

Of course, just like a social movement, the organization's goals will take years to reach. Before Oxfam America's mission to "create lasting solutions to poverty, hunger, and injustice" is fulfilled, small organizations like the Ball State Chapter will be necessary to keep the movement alive at the grassroots level ("Who We Are — Oxfam America," para. 1). The Oxfam America student organization, with its special relationship to the national organization, fills the role of a student organization as well as a social movement. As mentioned in the literature review, social movements are defined by Bill Moyer as "collective actions in which the populace is alerted, educated, and mobilized, sometimes over years and decades, to challenge the power holders and the whole society to redress social problems or grievances and restore critical social values" (Moyer, 2001, p. 111). Oxfam America and its supporting local organizations, like the student organization at Ball State, serve to organize these collective actions.

Whether or not Oxfam America as a whole can be considered a movement, there is no doubt that the student branch of Oxfam America at Ball State, with its grassroots appearance and approach to advocacy, constitute a movement of its own. Today there are as many as "7.5 million grassroots associations in the United States" that are working to affect positive change by informing and motivating the general public about various issues (Sobeck, 2007, pp. 18-19). The Oxfam America student organization at Ball State University is one small part of that effort. As a subset of Oxfam America in particular, it is part of a much larger movement of people who are passionate about international aid, hunger, poverty, and social justice.

My experience founding and leading the Oxfam America student organization gave me a chance to implement what I learned about social movements, student leadership development, and student organization models, in a practical setting. Although the success of the organization was based largely on the action of the entire group, the successful execution of events can be

attributed in part to my own organizational leadership and constant action. Even during its infant stage, I led the Oxfam America student organization in an informational and planning meeting and a successful petition event. Four weeks into the school year, the organization had advertised, gained about fifteen members, elected student leaders, and collected action on a petition that proved successful the very next week. Though the success of the petition was mostly luck, it boosted the members' confidence in the organization's potential for real change at the national and international level.

Over the course of the year we collected nearly 600 political actions on various legislative proposals and executive decisions related to international aid and hunger. Although that number may seem low for a university of over 18,000 undergraduates, for a first year organization on a largely politically inactive campus, 600 political actions is a positive step forward, and sets the standard for future student response to these issues.

From the beginning, the goal of the project was to create a lasting student organization that focuses on international aid and hunger issues. At least for another year, that goal has been met. By the end of the year the organization had approximately 20 active members, and had expanded its executive board to match the needs of the group. So far into the fall semester of the next year, the Oxfam student organization has held weekly meetings, a fundraising event, and petition event, and has planned the fall Hunger Banquet. Only time will tell how strong or weak the organization will become from this point on, but at this point the foundation is strong.

The organization's first year had just as many failures as successes. One of the biggest mistakes stemmed from a personal flaw; as a leader, I did not delegate or distribute power effectively. Not only did that lead to burn-out on my part, it caused other members of the executive board to feel unneeded and ineffective. By the second semester of the first year,

delegation was improved somewhat by rotating meeting leaders, but the problem still existed in event planning. Aside from the Hunger Banquet, most events were organized and prepared by myself unless a member specifically asked to help.

This experience taught me personally that the best leader is one who can teach others to lead, and more specifically that it is possible to be a strong leader while still allowing others to lead. I also learned the importance of group unity and culture to group effectiveness. Just as some of the theories had established, a strongly unified and cohesive group is more effective because each member is willing to help another to achieve collective goals. By the end of the first year, student members of Oxfam at Ball State were better acquainted and unified than the beginning, when most did not know more than one or two other members. My decision to add events that brought the group together, like the Muncie Children's Museum experience was surprisingly helpful to establishing that point. As theorized in Robert K Conyne's CORE model for evaluating student organization's effectiveness, the cohesion created by social events helped supplement the executive organization and available resources to create a more palpable and accessible energy for action. Allowing the flexibility to chat informally at meetings was also conducive to group camaraderie.

More broadly, the project was successful because the organization taught hundreds of Ball State Students about international development and hunger issues through advocacy, legislative action, and symbolic educational events. Having collected 600 political actions, the organization helped numerous students make the leap between knowledge and action. Education may be the first step, but when students take action and get involved, they show knowledge and passion for the cause. The collection of these individual actions represents a movement. Finally, by creating a group of well-informed members within the Oxfam America

student organization, the organization serves as a collection of leaders who can act as catalysts for future action at Ball State.

According to Oxfam America, the goal of the CHANGE program is “to broaden perspectives, inspire action, and shape a new generation of global citizens” (“Change Initiative,” para. 1). I believe the student organization at Ball State met that goal. Over the course of its founding year, the Oxfam America student organization led a stand up for poverty event, “Sow the Seed” event, Hunger Banquet, service event, petition contest, photo exhibit, peace fair, Invisible Children event, and two lobby visits. Through these events, not only were students educated and informed about social justice issues, many took action to create positive change on international aid, poverty and hunger issues.

In the future, it is my hope that the Oxfam America student organization at Ball State continues to grow and strengthen through new leadership and evolving goals. The goal of nongovernmental organizations to ‘do’ global citizenship starts with educating students about international issues, and how they can get involved and make a difference. Thanks to Oxfam’s strong commitment to student leaders as a force for change, and it’s incredible CHANGE initiative leadership program, Ball State students are more educated about issues related to hunger, poverty and injustice. Changes for the many must start with the few who are willing to lead. And when creating positive change it always does well to remember the quote by Margaret Mead that is so relevant to the world of grassroots movements, student organizations and NGOs: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has” (qtd. in Palmer, 1992, p. 14).